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### MANAGEMENT STAFF

Elaine J. Garry,  
President/CEO

Gary Fitterer,  
Director of Engineering

Mike Henke,  
Chief Financial Officer

Michelle Olson,  
Director of  
Member Services

Troy Swancutt,  
Director of Operations

Gwen Stevens,  
Director of Member &  
Community Relations

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Office Hours:

7:30 am – 4:00 pm, M–F

Telephone: 507-367-7000

Toll-Free: 800-214-2694

Web Address:

[www.peoplesenergy.coop](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop)

Gopher State One Call:

1-800-252-1166

(for digging & line location)

## LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

### GIVING THROUGH *OPERATION ROUND UP*®

*February is typically recognized as the “month of love” with Valentine’s Day on the 14th. Many pause from the routines and hectic pace of life to focus on others by sending a special message or small gift letting the recipient know they are cared for.*

*It’s in a similar spirit of caring for others that the Operation Round Up® (ORU) program exists. Since 2002, members of People’s Energy Cooperative have been rounding up their electric bills to the next dollar to help support non-profit organizations within the PEC service territory.*

**ONE CENT HERE... 72 CENTS THERE...** each month has added up to over \$526,000 being distributed to a variety of worthy, non-profit organizations in our service area. Funds have helped stock local food shelves, equip volunteer fire and ambulance departments, build playgrounds, expand educational opportunities for children, recognize veterans, and provide health and safety services for seniors.

**HOW OPERATION ROUND UP® WORKS:** Members are automatically enrolled in the program when they join and can opt-out if they so choose. The money collected goes into the “Peoples Cooperative Services Trust Fund” (the legal name of the ORU fund). The amount contributed is indicated on the bill as the “Round Up” line item. The average contribution from a member is about six dollars per year.

Applications from area non-profits are due on the 20th day of the last month of each quarter. They are reviewed by Cooperative staff for completeness and to verify non-profit status.

In the first month of each quarter, the volunteer ORU Board of Directors meets to review applications and award grant dollars. The current ORU Board consists of Board Chair Ben Hain (Dist. 1), Beverly Johnson (Dist. 2), Mark Williamson (Dist. 3), Kathy McFarland (Dist. 4), James Hobbs (Dist. 5), Darlene Schmidt (Dist. 6) and Judy Swenson (Dist. 7).

Grant money is distributed to organizations once they provide an invoice for the products and/or services they requested the money for. See who received grants for first quarter 2015 on page 3.



# CEO MESSAGE

FROM ELAINE J. GARRY, PRESIDENT & CEO



*Elaine J. Garry*

egarry@peoplesrec.com

*In January, the People's Energy Cooperative Board of Directors approved the Work Plan and Budget for 2015. The plan is developed by the management staff, in coordination with employees, to serve as a guide for our work for the year. This work plan can also impact rates for the next year. I am very pleased to report that member rates will stay the same for another year! There are several important reasons why we were able to maintain stable rates:*

- **NO POWER COST INCREASE:** Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC), our power supplier, makes every effort to keep rates reasonable, protect our investment in that organization and meet our future needs. In past years, many different variables have made this very difficult. Through hard work and persistence, the DPC Board has achieved stability in rates for the past two years.
- **NO ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES:** Although the Environmental Protection Agency is working on new regulations regarding carbon pollution guidelines, the new regulations are not final. This has helped keep power costs stable.
- **ALLIANT ACQUISITION:** The 2015 budget includes an assumption that we will close on the purchase of the Alliant service area by March 31. Over time, this acquisition will help stabilize rates by spreading fixed costs over more users and by allowing us to make more efficient and effective use of our equipment and human resources.
- **WORK PROCESSES:** We are working hard to find efficiencies in operations to help lower costs, repair outages more quickly and respond to member needs in a timely and professional manner. We expect the technology and procedural changes we have implemented will continue to help stabilize our costs.

Once the Alliant acquisition is complete, we plan to conduct a cost-of-service study which will help us understand the costs related to each rate class of

service for our legacy system, our new Alliant members and the combined system. This study will be critical in helping the Board of Directors set rates in the future.

The 2015 Work Plan and Budget also includes several other large and important projects.

- **\$8 MILLION INVESTMENT IN PLANT:** We have budgeted to add new plant and replace aging plant in both our legacy cooperative service area and our new Alliant service area. This construction will help improve service reliability.
- **COMMUNITY SOLAR PROJECT:** We plan to build and construct a community solar plant for those members who wish to purchase renewable energy and invest in a hedge against higher energy costs in the future. This community solar plant will be built and sold so that the owners of the panels are not subsidized by other members.
- **NEW AUTOMATED METERING INFRASTRUCTURE (AMI) SYSTEM:** During 2014, we evaluated the benefits of upgrading to a new AMI system which include providing more reliable data to assist in the operation of our system, mitigating issues prior to member complaints and confirming correct operation of load control to name a few. A new AMI system will allow us the option to offer prepaid metering and time-of-use rates to our members in the future. We are currently in the process of evaluating bids from AMI vendors and anticipate making a final choice by March and begin deployment of a pilot program by third quarter.

*I am excited about this year's plan! It is designed to meet our member's expectations for service quality, reliability and affordability as well as to meet all the local, state and federal regulations. As always, I welcome your thoughts and concerns.*

*Sincerely,*  
**Elaine J. Garry,**  
**President & CEO,**  
**507-367-7000**



OPERATION ROUND UP®

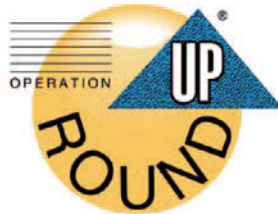
# Jan. Grants



Bob, Scott, Pete, Mark, Michelle (not pictured: Gary & Gene)

People's Energy Cooperative's Operation Round Up® Trust Board granted \$20,423 to the following organizations in the first quarter of 2015:

- **\$974.37: BYRON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL / COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER** – For a school-wide, leveled, guided reading library.
- **\$5,984: CITY OF ELGIN** – For playground equipment.
- **\$1,218: ARBOR GARDENS SENIOR HOUSING** – For iPads.
- **\$1,396.78: CITY OF ORONOCO** – For chairs for the senior's area of the Community Center.
- **\$258: HABITAT FOR HUMANITY - FREEBORN/MOWER** – For two fiberglass podium step ladders.
- **\$1,050: PLAINVIEW AREA COMMUNITY AND YOUTH CENTER** – To repair the roof.
- **\$3,500: ROCHESTER STUDENTS' HEALTH SERVICES** – For medical equipment and supplies.
- **\$1,967: ST. ELIZABETH'S MEDICAL CENTER** – For training to promote senior health, wellness and mental health.
- **\$750: SHARE CHRISTMAS** – For food, clothes, toys, blankets and toiletries.
- **\$750: ST. CHARLES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** – For books for the school library.
- **\$1,049.85: STEWARTVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS** – For a Mindstorm LEGO Robotics Program for 4th-8th graders.
- **\$1,525: WILLOW CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL PTSA** – For a 3D printer and five spools of filament.



## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

In January each year, the Board of Directors and management staff host an employee appreciation breakfast for all cooperative employees.

The following employees celebrated milestone anniversaries in 2014 and were recognized for their dedication to the Cooperative:

- **MARK HALLUM, 30 YEARS**  
Journeyman Line Worker
- **SCOTT HUBBARD, 30 YEARS**  
Journeyman Line Worker
- **GARY KOEHNE, 25 YEARS**  
Journeyman Line Worker
- **BOB SNAZA, 20 YEARS**  
Electrical Technician
- **PETE REESE, 15 YEARS**  
Meter Technician
- **GENE SCHMIDT, 15 YEARS**  
General Maintenance
- **MICHELLE OLSON, 5 YEARS**  
Director of Member Services



## 2015 NOMINATING, CREDENTIALS, AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Thank you to the members from District 2 and 4 who are serving on the 2015 Nominating, Credentials and Elections Committee.

**District 2 Committee:** Brad Schmidt, Veronica Stevens and David Swart. **District 4 Committee:** James Dittrich, Sue Kennebeck, Jane Klassen, Kathy McFarland, Robert McGrath, Darvey Sloan and Cindy Stamschror.

To be considered for the next round of disbursements, applications must be received no later than March 20, 2015. Guidelines and applications for Operation Round Up® donations are available at [www.peoplesenergy.coop](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop) or by calling People's Energy Cooperative at 800-214-2694. Seventeen thousand seven hundred fifteen.



# Crock Pot LASAGNA



*February's theme is for the slow-cooker/crock pot. The recipe was submitted anonymously.*

Future months will have a theme relative to the month or season. Got a recipe you'd like to share? Please send recipe ideas to the Cooperative either by US mail or by email to [memberrelations@peoplesrec.com](mailto:memberrelations@peoplesrec.com) by the first of each month to be considered for that month's newsletter.

*The theme for April will be appetizers and May's will be recipes for the grill.*

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 box of lasagna noodles
- 1 large jar of spaghetti sauce
- 1½ cups of cottage cheese (Greek yogurt can be used as a substitute)
- 1½ cups mozzarella cheese
- 2 Tbs. grated Parmesan cheese

## INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Brown ground beef and drain the fat.
2. Spoon one cup of the spaghetti sauce in the bottom of a 4 quart crock pot. Mix remaining sauce with beef.
3. Place a single layer of uncooked lasagna noodles on sauce in crock pot, spread one-third of the meat mixture on top of noodles and ¾ cup cottage cheese over meat. Sprinkle ½ cup mozzarella cheese over cottage cheese.
4. Add second layer of noodles, one-third meat mixture, the remaining cottage cheese and ½ cup mozzarella cheese.
5. Add the third layer of noodles, remaining meat mixture and mozzarella cheese.
6. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese over the top, and cook on low for four (4) hours. Enjoy!

## SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE: RECEIVE & PAY YOUR ELECTRIC BILL ON-LINE!

*In today's hectic world, it's important to take advantage of opportunities to simplify routine tasks, eliminate clutter and save time. SmartHub can help when it comes to your electric bill.*

**UNCLUTTER YOUR SPACE:** Reduce the amount of mail you need to sort through by accessing your bill online through SmartHub. SmartHub allows you to view your account information in real-time and pay your bill on-line. You can choose to pay by credit card (MasterCard, Discover or VISA) or by electronic check.

**SAVE A CHECK AND A STAMP** when you enroll in our Automatic Bill Payment Plan. It's less work for you and the Cooperative because your electric bill payment is deducted from your checking, savings, or credit card automatically on the due date each month.

*To learn more about SmartHub or to get started with online billing and automatic payment options, visit [www.peoplesenergy.coop](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop) and select "Account Management – Smart-Hub" from the "Your Account" drop down.*



MEET THE STAFF THAT SERVES YOU

# PEC Member Services



Michelle



Adam



Ashley



Liz



Carla



Brandon



Bob



Pete

*We'd like to introduce you to the staff that serves you, the members of People's Energy Cooperative. Each month we'll feature a different department, starting this month with Member Services.*

The department is led by Director of Member Services **Michelle Olson**, who manages the member service representatives, key account representative/energy advisor, electrical technician and meter technician.

Member service representatives (*MSRs*) are typically the first people you encounter when you visit or call the Cooperative office. They primarily assist with inquiries related to member accounts and the Cooperative's services, products and programs.

MSRs **Adam**, **Ashley**, **Liz**, and MSR Lead **Carla** are available to serve you Monday through Friday, during regular business hours (7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.).

The focus of our key account representative/energy advisor, **Brandon Johnson** is exactly what his title says. He works closely with large commercial, industrial and agricultural members to help them better understand the Cooperative's programs and services and to help them save money through rebates and energy efficiency efforts.

Electrical Technician **Bob** is responsible for improving service to members in the areas of power quality, stray voltage investigation, the installation and maintenance of load management equipment and low voltage (600 volts and below) wiring as required by the Cooperative.

**Pete**, the Cooperative's meter technician, installs, replaces, and tests meters to ensure they are operating correctly. He also edits and programs software and firmware of all cooperative meters and maintains current versions of meter software. It's a busy job considering there are over 16,000 meters.

*So, whether you have questions about your account, want to learn more about energy efficiency, or require the services of our electrical or meter technician, you can count on receiving superior member service. Ten thousand ten.*



## TAKE ONE AND SHOW IT TO YOUR PHARMACIST.

SAVE UP TO 85% ON  
PRESCRIPTION DRUGS AT  
PARTICIPATING PHARMACIES  
WHEN YOU SHOW YOUR  
CO-OP CONNECTIONS CARD.

FIND ALL THE WAYS TO SAVE AT  
**[WWW.CONNECTIONS.COOP](http://WWW.CONNECTIONS.COOP)**



*Pharmacy discounts are Not Insurance,  
and are Not Intended as a Substitute for  
Insurance. The discount is only available  
at participating pharmacies.*

## CO-OP CONNECTIONS

People's Energy Cooperative is actively seeking local businesses to participate in the Coop Connections program. If you are a business owner or manager and are interested in a free program that exposes your business to over 12,000 households, contact Gwen Stevens at 507-367-7015 or [gstevens@peoplesrec.com](mailto:gstevens@peoplesrec.com) to learn more about how Coop Connections can help promote your business!



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

# PULL THE PLUG

### ON OUTDATED APPLIANCES & SAVE!



*Replacing a perfectly functional appliance can be painful. But pulling the plug on an outdated refrigerator or dishwasher might save you money in the long run; new appliances are often considerably more energy-efficient.*

A new refrigerator consumes 75 percent less energy than a 1970s model. Replace a vintage clothes washer and save approximately \$60 on utility bills and nearly 5,000 gallons of water a year. Not every new appliance is a good bet; always look for the ENERGY STAR label. It signals energy-efficient models. Ready to save?

## FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO PULL THE PLUG!

- ▶ **LAUNDRY COSTS:** *In the laundry room, a full-sized ENERGY STAR-certified clothes washer uses 15 gallons of water per load, compared to the 23 gallons used by a standard machine. During the machine's lifetime, this saves 27,000 gallons of water.*
- ▶ **SAVING IN THE KITCHEN:** *Replace your refrigerator with an ENERGY STAR-certified model to save between \$200 and \$1,100 in lifetime energy costs. Today's average refrigerator uses less energy than a continually lit 60-watt light bulb. Resist the urge to move the old refrigerator to the basement or the garage. Instead, say goodbye and recycle the energy-guzzler and earn a \$25 recycling rebate. Four thousand nine hundred eleven.*  
*Was your dishwasher built before 1994? If so, you might be paying an extra \$40 a year on your utility bills compared to neighbors with an ENERGY STAR-qualified model.*
- ▶ **SCREEN SAVINGS:** *Televisions might be a little more baffling. As screen sizes increase, energy consumption may also rise. You can still be a savvy shopper. ENERGY STAR-certified TVs are about 25 percent more efficient than conventional models. LED screens use 20 percent less energy than LCD TVs.*  
*Once you purchase a TV, calibrate it by adjusting the contrast and brightness to a moderate level. By default, new televisions are set to dynamic, high-contrast settings. This consumes more power than standard, lower-contrast settings.*
- ▶ **SMART SETTINGS:** *Too attached to old appliances? You can still save with smart settings. For example, heating water creates the greatest expense when washing dishes or clothes. Set your water heater at 120 degrees and be sure your clothes washer or dishwasher is full whenever used.*

## SAVE WITHOUT BUYING NEW:

**NOT TOO COOL FOOD:** *Keep your refrigerator at the recommended temperatures of 37 to 40 degrees for the fresh food and zero degrees for the freezer.*

**TOAST, DON'T ROAST:** *Use toaster or microwave ovens for small meals rather than your large stovetop or oven.*

**AIR DRY DISHES:** *Use the dishwasher's "eco" option or use a no-heat air dry feature. Scrape food pieces off the plates, rather than rinsing them.*

**COLD CLOTHES & LOSE LINT:** *Wash clothes in cold water using cold-water detergents whenever possible. Adjust load settings for smaller loads. Clean the lint screen in the dryer after every use to improve efficiency.*



If you pull the plug on old appliances and replace them with new Energy Star models, make sure you take advantage of the \$25 appliance rebates available through People's Energy Cooperative.

**Rebate forms are available at:**  
**[www.peoplesenergy.coop](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop)**



## Are you grounded? **GFCI OUTLETS** can help!



Standard GFCI outlet.

*Did you know there are different types of electrical outlets? Each are designed for different purposes; however, there is one specific type that stands high above the rest – the ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlet. GFCIs have saved thousands of lives and cut the number of electrocutions in half since the 1970s. If your home lacks GFCI outlets, don't fret – you can learn how to get “grounded.” Twenty-four.*

GFCIs are the most efficient outlet in protecting from electrical shock. If it senses a loss of current, the outlet switches off power to that circuit. These devices can either be installed in your electrical system or built into a power cord. The third hole at the bottom of the outlet is known as the “ground” slot, and it monitors electrical currents that flow through the left

“neutral” slot and the right “hot” slot on each outlet. A GFCI can react faster than a blink of an eye to any imbalance of power by immediately shutting off the electrical current. These outlets are now a requirement in all places where water could potentially come into contact with electrical products such as bathrooms, garages, outdoors and kitchens. GFCIs are not exclusive to three-prong outlets. They can be installed into standard outlets, and there are even portable devices available when installation is not practical.

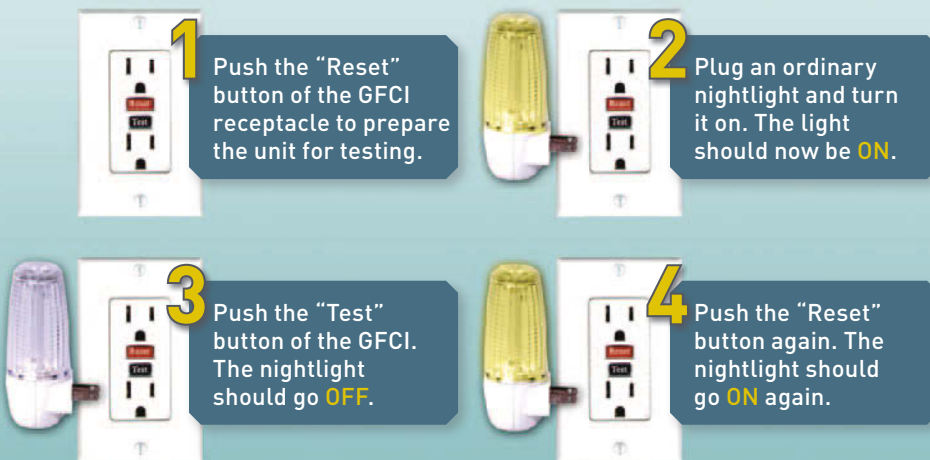
GFCIs should be tested at least once a month to ensure they are working effectively. The first step you need to take is to test an item, such as a lamp, that visibly powers on when plugged in. Push the “reset” button to prepare the outlet then push the “test” button. Did your lamp turn off? If it did, the GFCI is working properly. Now, hit the “reset” button once again to power it back on. If your lamp did not power off, then you should contact a certified electrician to correct the problem.

*Next time you have a free moment, take the time to look around your house. If you're not “grounded,” consider updating your electrical outlets to GFCIs.*

GRAPHIC SOURCE: Electrical Safety Foundation International

### HOW TO TEST YOUR ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

*After 10 years or so, the sensitive circuitry inside a GFCI can wear out. The electrical receptacle in a GFCI may continue to function, even if the GFCI circuit no longer works. If this is the case, have a qualified electrician replace it as soon as possible. GFCIs should be checked monthly to determine if they are operating properly. A portable GFCI should be used out-of-doors with various electrical power tools (i.e., drills, mowers, trimmers) and should be tested before each use. To test a device, follow these four steps:*





## People's Energy Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

1775 Lake Shady Avenue South  
Oronoco, Minnesota 55960

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## 24-HOUR OUTAGE NUMBER

### WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT, SO DO WE

Call even if you think your neighbors have reported the outage. Leave one light on so you know when power has been restored. Have an emergency kit prepared.

**507.367.7000 or 800.214.2694**

## SPOT YOUR NUMBER

# \$30

Each month, we hide four account numbers in the Highline and one on our website. If you find your account number\*, contact the office by the end of the current month at **507.367.7000** and you'll receive a \$30 credit on your electric bill.

\*Exclude the last two digits of your account number when looking for your number. Nobody found their numbers in January's newsletter or online. Account numbers not found: Lavonne Benike, Bernard & Stacy Blee, Jamie & Kara Kapplinger, Stephen Walters and Charles Duryea.



## PROTECT

Our security and medical alert systems protect your loved ones from intruders, carbon monoxide, fire, medical emergencies and other threats.



[www.heartlandss.com](http://www.heartlandss.com)

Call Heartland Security  
at **888-264-6380**

## WHAT MATTERS MOST

RESIDENTIAL

COMMERCIAL

AGRICULTURE

MEDICAL

**THE POWER  
TO PROTECT**

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

FOR THESE IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

**March 13:** ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE YOUTH TOUR TO WASHINGTON, DC APPLICATIONS DUE. The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour has brought high school students to Washington, D.C. every June since the late 1950s. We believe that students should see their nation's capital up close, learn about the political process and interact with their elected officials. *For more information, please visit our website or contact Gwen Stevens at 507-367-7015 or [gstevens@peoplesrec.com](mailto:gstevens@peoplesrec.com).*

**March 20:** APPLICATION DEADLINE FOR OPERATION ROUND-UP®. The ORU Trust Board meets each quarter to review applications and grant funds for local, worthy causes that meet the qualifications according to the Bylaws of the Trust. *Applications can be found online at [www.peoplesenergy.coop](http://www.peoplesenergy.coop).*

**April 21:** ANNUAL MEETING. Mark your calendar and plan to attend PEC's Annual Meeting being held in the evening at the Cooperative headquarters in Oronoco. *You will receive more information in March.*